

OLD ENTOMOLOGICAL SIGNBOARDS

Among the hundreds of signboards mentioned in "The History of Signboards," by Jacob Larwood and John Camden Hotten, London c.1866, only a very few were adorned by what might be called entomological devices and these certainly did not indicate the business of the shop for the benefit of customers who could not read. Grasshoppers on London signboards of the seventeenth century were good luck emblems. The shop of Sir Thomas Gresham carried the portrait of a grasshopper and Charles Duncombe and Richard Kent, goldsmiths lived at the Grasshopper on Lombard Street in 1677.

Many shopkeepers of London used the illustration of a beehive, beneath which the following lines indicated the industry of the owners.

"Within this hive, we're all alive,
Good liquor makes us funny :
"If you are dry, step in and try
The flavour of our honey."

Larwood and Hotten mention an actual hive full of active bees which topped a signpost, at Grantham in Lincolnshire, many years ago. Fifty years ago and less, I recall seeing the beehive on signboards of small shops in Philadelphia and in surrounding towns. In fact some were called The Beehive and used this device in their advertising.

One last example is that a tea-dealer of Oxford Street, Tottenham Court Road, at the end of the eighteenth century, who had the leaf insect of India for his sign.—H. B. W.